



State Representative Shay Schual-Berke

33rd District



2005 Legislative Report

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It's good to be home after a productive legislative session where I focused on improving education, jobs, health care, and the well being of our children and families!

As promised, I am reporting to you my votes on selected key state issues and priority legislation for our district. You can see my entire voting record at <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/schual-berke/>.

Unfortunately, there is not enough space to describe all we did this year to improve transportation. But I am enthusiastic about the new jobs and improvements I voted for, and will gladly send detailed information on any subject if you contact me.

It is my pleasure to work for you all 12 months of the year - not only when the Legislature is in session - and so I'm pleased to tell you about the opening of my district office in Burien, which will make it easier for you to visit and share ideas. The address is:

Rep. Shay Schual-Berke
15111 8th Ave. S.W., Suite 303
Burien, WA 98166
Phone: (206) 439-3735

I hope you will call, visit or email if I can assist you, or if you have any questions about votes or actions. Thank you for the privilege of representing you!

Warmly,

Shay Schual-Berke, M.D.
State Representative
33rd Legislative District

PS – To stay updated on the very latest legislative news, subscribe to my electronic legislative newsletter. Just send me an email and I'll make sure you get all the latest news.

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(Please see District Office information in letter)



That's me signing the shovel at Mount Rainier High School's groundbreaking! Our work to improve state funding for school construction meant an added \$4,290,619 for Mount Rainier High School.

Photo courtesy of
Highline Times

Historic mental health reform

I have been fortunate to be the lead sponsor for landmark legislation that passed this year, after eight years of effort. Our Mental Health Parity reforms will directly help 900,000 Washington residents who have been treated unfairly by insurance plans that arbitrarily limit mental health treatment or charge unreasonable co-pays, deductibles, and out-of-pocket maximums. Indirectly, parity helps *everyone*, because untreated mental illness imposes staggering costs on taxpayers and businesses.

Together, we achieved an historic victory. As the *Tacoma News Tribune* put it, "There's no rational reason for treating an illness of the brain differently than an illness of the lungs, heart or any other organ. With treatment, a mental illness can be controlled or even cured. That's healthy for people, for businesses and for communities" (*Feb. 8 editorial*).

Supporting Education

The 2005 Legislature dramatically improved support for public schools, which will significantly help students and teachers, ultimately improving our children's likelihood of future success.

- After two years of being suspended due to lack of funds, the people's teacher-salary and class-size initiatives (I-728 & I-732) are *fully funded* for 2005-07.
- New Learning Assistance Program reforms will help Kent and Highline schools by targeting funding to school districts with large numbers of low-income families.
- Special Education funding reforms also benefit Kent and Highline schools.

Overall, the 2005 Legislature increased state funding for Washington's public schools by \$981 million – about \$468 *per student*. This means an additional \$7.8 million for Highline schools and an additional \$10.4 million for Kent schools.

I'm grateful to the P.T.A., teachers, concerned parents and others who supported our efforts to make 2005 a great year for children and public schools.

Anton's Law will save more young lives

In 1999, when I worked on the first state law in the nation to require effective booster seats for young children, we named it Anton's Law to honor a young boy who died in a car accident because his seat belt didn't fit. I'm very proud that in 2003 President Bush signed a national Anton's Law inspired by our state law and named after the same child.

Anton's mom worked with me this year for a new common-sense child-restraint law that will save even more young lives by using new National Highway Traffic Safety Administration standards. Our new law requires child-restraint systems for children up to eight years old or 80 pounds, unless the child is at least four foot nine inches tall. It also says children under age 13 should ride in the back seat, when practical.

Secretary of Health Mary Selecky testified my proposal (HB 1475) was needed because effective child-restraint laws are "the easiest way to prevent death to children." I'm grateful lawmakers heeded her advice by passing the updated Anton's Law. It will save lives.

Keep Kids Safe!

Bernie Dorsey, a local citizen, came to me with a great idea: why not create a Keep Kids Safe license plate that supports efforts to prevent child abuse?

Mr. Dorsey united with Denise Idings to collect more than 2,000 signatures for the special license plate. When Denise lost her three-month-old grandson, Kaden, to child abuse, she promised Kaden would not die in vain. Mr. Dorsey helped her to keep her promise – the colorful hand prints on the Keep Kids Safe license plate are Kaden's.

I'm proud the Keep Kids Safe license plate I sponsored became law in April. For a few extra dollars, Washington state drivers can now send a message about keeping kids safe while helping to fund child-abuse prevention through the Children's Trust Account. Mr. Dorsey showed that a single person with a good idea can make a positive difference in the lives of many. **If you have a good idea for a state law or policy, please let me know.**

State investments for local needs

Being an advocate for needed local projects is my main job on the Capital Budget Committee. Low interest rates made this a good time for capital investments. I'm happy to report we succeeded in securing needed state funding to:

- Generate local jobs and economic development through the City of Burien's Town Square project, a public-private partnership to revitalize downtown Burien. (\$2 million).
- Preserve facilities at historic Camp Waskowitz, which has served generations of students and helps 6,000 5th and 6th graders each year through the Highline School District's nationally recognized environmental education program. (\$400,000).
- Double the capacity of Kent's wonderful Pediatric Interim Care Facility to care for infants suffering from prenatal drug exposure (\$617,000).
- Help develop a Lutheran Community Services center that will offer child care, senior assistance and other services to 12,000 people a year in the SeaTac community. (\$400,000)
- Restore historic cabins at Des Moines Beach Park. (\$300,000).
- Help Highline Community College renovate and replace buildings on its unique Marine Science and Technology Pier, for teaching and research (\$500,000).



Camp Waskowitz serves our children well.



Kent's Pediatric Interim Care Facility expands

How I Voted on Key State Issues in 2005

Fiscal responsibility

A balanced state budget

I voted **YES** for a balanced budget that invests in education, health care and other needs *without* increasing general sales, business or property taxes. Key investments include:



- Raising funding for public schools by \$468 per student – fully funding the people’s class-size and teacher salary initiatives (I-732, I-728)
- Enabling 38,000 more children to receive health care.
- Opening college doors to 7,900 additional students.
- Significantly improving mental health treatment.
- Improving long-term care funding, while *reducing* the nursing home bed tax.
- Saving food assistance for more than 11,000 state residents – mostly senior citizens.
- \$462,000 I fought for to ensure treatment for infant disorders detected through newborn screening. Treating these disorders before they cause lifelong disability, retardation or early death will prevent enormous family and public costs.
- \$550,000 to help Benson Heights Rehabilitation Center in Kent continue care for veterans and other seniors. The center was threatened by unfair and burdensome taxes.

Independent performance audits

Taxpayers deserve more accountability and efficiency in state spending. I sponsored and voted **YES** for the new Independent Performance Audit law. State Auditor Brian Sonntag called it “one of the most significant actions ever by the Legislature to ensure accountability in state government.” (HB 1064)

Fruit & vegetable processor tax break.

I voted **NO** on the special-interest tax break that benefits only fruit and vegetable processors. This special tax exemption was not justified, and when special interests get tax breaks no one else gets, the rest of us get stuck with higher tax bills. (HB 2221)

Helping schools and families

\$100 million helps schools and taxpayers

By allowing *existing* real estate excise taxes to increase state bonding capacity for school construction, we added \$100 million of state assistance for local school construction without raising taxes. This will get more children out of overcrowded classrooms and portables at much less cost to local property-tax levies. **YES.** (HB 2170)



Learning Assistance Reform

New Learning Assistance reforms ensure state dollars go to the areas of greatest need. This reform means an added \$87,000 to the Kent School District and \$921,000 for the Highline School District. **Excused.** Would have voted **YES.** (HB 1066)

Uniting resources for early learning.

The Washington Early Learning Council will unify and expand early learning opportunities for children from birth to age 5. Bringing state policies in line with scientific research on effective early learning is one of the best things we can do for Washington’s children. **YES.** (HB 1152, sponsor)

The Justice and Raiden Law

Six-week-old Raiden and 16-month-old Justice died of starvation last November as their mother lay passed out drunk in a Kent apartment. We passed the Justice and Raiden Law to pre-

vent similar tragedies. It calls for earlier intervention in cases of severe child neglect and a greater focus on parental substance abuse by Child Protective Services. **YES.** (SB 5922).

Protecting women’s rights & safety

Shawna Hughes suffered repeated physical abuse and threats from her estranged husband, but was denied a divorce solely because she was pregnant. This Spokane case made headlines. It won’t happen again. I sponsored and voted **YES** for a law that bars judges from using pregnancy as the sole basis for denying a divorce. (HB 1171)

Improving health and health care

Prescription Drugs

The 2003 reforms I supported will save taxpayers \$100 million over the next two years! This year, I voted **YES** to enable businesses and individuals to participate in state savings from bulk-purchasing and evidence-based buying decisions. This will help 81,000 senior citizens and 122,000 younger citizens reduce prescription drug costs. (SB 5471). I was the key sponsor of a bill (HB 1316) to import safe prescription drugs from licensed Canadian wholesalers, if the federal government approves. The Senate version (SB 5470) passed.



Stem cell research

Stem cell research may find cures for diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer’s disease, and other diseases. I wrote a proposal to encourage ethical stem cell research and ensure it is never used for reproductive cloning. Despite strong bipartisan support, it died in the Senate. I’ll keep working on this. **YES.** (HB 1268).

Health care for all children

We made a commitment to ensure all Washington kids have health care coverage by 2010. It’s the right thing to do for children and our future. As a first step, we expanded health care coverage to 38,000 more children in low-income families. **YES.** (HB 1441, sponsor)

Helping seniors and the disabled in nursing homes

The income of elderly and disabled citizens in publicly-funded nursing homes goes to the cost of their care. Until now, they could only keep \$42.62 a month for clothes, shampoo, batteries or other personal expenses. I’m proud I helped increase this by \$10 per month – the first increase in 17 years. **YES.** (Budget item. Same as HB 1773, which I sponsored).

Malpractice reform

As the only physician in the legislature, I know how badly we need to reform our medical malpractice laws. People deserve protection from malpractice, and good doctors and hospitals need affordable insurance. I voted **NO** on a legislative alternative (HB 2292) to the two reform initiatives on this November’s ballot because we should have passed these laws in Olympia and gotten the job done.

Jobs and the economy

Job Development Fund

A new Job Development Fund will provide grants (not loans) to help local investments in job-producing infrastructure. One of the first grants: \$2 million to help develop Burien Town Square. **YES.** (HB 1903, sponsor)



The Life Sciences Discovery Fund

I voted **YES** for the Life Sciences Discovery Fund. This bold public-private partnership will match state tobacco-settlement dollars with business funding to promote cutting-edge research and thousands of jobs in biotechnology, health sciences and agriculture. Maintaining Washington’s leadership in the sciences is crucial for our future. (SB 5581)

Protecting consumers

Prosecuting spyware

Internet users hate spyware, which is sneaked into computers and secretly transmits private information to the perpetrator. A tough new spyware law will impose penalties up to \$100,000 per violation. **YES.** (HB 1012)



Your right to cell-phone privacy

AARP and the Consumers’ Union helped us pass the cell-phone privacy act. Wireless companies must now get your written permission *before* listing your cell-phone number in a public directory, and they *cannot* charge you extra fees for keeping your cell-phone numbers private. **YES.** (HB 1185)

Increasing affordable housing

At my Kent City Hall forum on insurance problems facing local citizens, many people said soaring liability insurance costs are strangling the supply of affordable housing. We enacted a solution — supported by homeowners *and* builders — that will protect homeowner rights and boost affordable housing. **YES.** (HB 1848)

Slumlord Accountability Act

When Burien had to shut down the Juanita Apartments due to over 400 health and safety violations, local taxpayers paid \$70,000 to relocate the displaced families. I voted **YES** for a law that makes slumlords — not taxpayers — pay to relocate families when unsafe dwellings are condemned due to gross landlord neglect. (HB 5577).

Election reform

What we passed

I heard citizen concerns about the 2004 elections and supported election reforms to ensure the problems will not be repeated. These were controversial measures, and we have more work to do. These reforms include:



- State performance audits of all county elections offices (HB 1749). **YES.**
- A new statewide voter database to cross-check for felons or others voting illegally, and severe penalties for illegal voting (SB 5743). **YES.**
- Giving counties the option of all-mail voting (HB 1754). **YES.**
- Requiring voter ID at the polls, statewide standards for verifying voter signatures, and improved ballot security (SB 5499). **YES.**
- Requiring voting machines to produce written receipts (SB 5395). **YES.**

Making you re-register to vote.

I supported election reform, but was a loud **NO** on a bizarre proposal to force every voter in the state to re-register – even people who have voted legitimately all their adult lives. With help from senior citizens and others, we defeated this needless burden (AMD 508).

